United Nations A/60/133

General Assembly

Distr.: General
19 July 2005

Original: English

Sixtieth session
Item 64 of the provisional agenda*
Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Global analysis and evaluation of national action plans on youth employment

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to resolution 58/133, in which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to include in his report to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session a global analysis and evaluation of national action plans on youth employment.

Section II of the report provides an overview of the challenges relating to youth employment and puts this issue in the context of the Millennium Declaration, including the interlinked international agenda on development and collective security. Section III provides an analysis and evaluation of 39 national action plans or progress reports on youth employment. This section analyses both the policy and programmatic orientations of these action plans and the process by which they were developed. Section IV draws a series of conclusions from this analysis and section V concludes with a series of recommendations regarding the role of the Secretary-General's Youth Employment Network as an enhanced peer exchange, support and review mechanism for catalysing action on youth employment at the national and global levels.

* A/60/150.

05-43123 (E) 110805

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I. Background

1. This report has been prepared in response to General Assembly resolutions 57/165 on promoting youth employment and 58/133 on policies and programmes involving youth, in which the Assembly encouraged Member States to prepare national reviews and action plans on youth employment and invited the International Labour Organization (ILO), within the overall framework of the Youth Employment Network, to prepare a global analysis and evaluation of progress made in that regard. The Assembly, in its resolution 58/133, specified that those national action plans on youth employment could either be integrated into Member States' national action plans on employment or be issued as separate documents. In that resolution also, it requested the Secretary-General to submit the global analysis and evaluation to it at its sixtieth session within the framework of its 10-year review of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. Guidelines for the preparation of the national reviews and action plans were provided to Member States in the form of a guidance note contained in annex I to the report of the Secretary-General on promoting youth employment (A/58/229).

2. Because of length constraints, the present report summarizes the findings of a larger report to be published by ILO on the global analysis of national action on youth employment. The present report should be read in conjunction with the World Youth Report 2005 (A/60/61-E/2005/7) and the report of the Secretary-General to the Commission for Social Development entitled "Review of further implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly" (E/CN.5/2005/6).

II. Youth employment: overview of challenges

3. ILO estimates that around 88 million young women and men are unemployed throughout the world and many more young people are working long hours for low pay, struggling to survive in the informal economy.[1] This places the youth share of the total 186 million unemployed persons globally at 47 per cent, a particularly troublesome figure given that youth make up only 25 per cent of the working-age population. ILO also reports an increase in intermittent (temporary, part-time, casual) work and insecure arrangements for young people in both industrialized and developing economies.

4. In addition to the challenges of unemployment and underemployment, young people are confronted by further obstacles which make them especially vulnerable to social, economic, physical and psychological influences.[2] Many young people never complete secondary school, about two thirds of school dropouts are young girls and less than one fourth of girls attend secondary school in many developing countries. Furthermore, the majority of people newly infected with HIV/AIDS are young, with a higher infection rate among young women than young men. Other factors, in combination with young people's age, which make them especially vulnerable are disability, ethnic and social background or geographic location.

5. Since the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the challenge of youth employment has been increasingly recognized by the international community. The Economic Commission for Africa, for example, has made specific recommendations with regard to youth employment, highlighting the

role of the Youth Employment Network in addressing this challenge. In particular, the Commission recommended that $30 million should be allocated to help 25 sub-Saharan African countries prepare and begin implementation of national action plans on youth employment and to assist in leveraging additional resources recommended for the Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund and the infrastructure development fund towards the implementation of these national plans.

6. Youth employment also offers the most obvious bridge between the development and security agendas embodied in the Millennium Declaration. A poor economic and social environment can foster conditions in which young people are recruited or forced into armed conflicts, not only within their own countries, but also in neighbouring countries. Young people are often the prime victims of such conflicts. Civil wars and social conflicts can also have a negative impact on economic growth, investment and the secure development of entire regions. Employment growth is a key to reducing the tensions behind many security issues today, as well as other social challenges such as irregular migration, trafficking, gender inequality and poverty.

7. Following its mission to West Africa in July 2003, the Security Council reported that "in every country visited, the mission heard about the problem of unemployment, particularly among young people, and how this was a perennial source of instability in West Africa". The mission expressed the hope that the Office of the Special Representative for West Africa would undertake a major collaborative effort with its partners to devise a practical and concerted regional approach to this pressing problem.[5] In a statement by its President of 25 February 2005 (S/PRST/2005/9), the Security Council reaffirmed the urgency of finding lasting solutions to the problem of youth unemployment in West Africa in order to prevent the recruitment of such youth by illegal armed groups.

8. There is no one cause of youth unemployment and underemployment, nor is there a single approach or strategy for addressing the challenge. However, the partners in the Youth Employment Network[6] recognize that the responses should be integrated and comprehensive, addressing both supply and demand.

9. Whatever policy solutions are prescribed in a given context, young people need to be engaged as active partners in the design and implementation of policies that affect them. Rather than being a target group for which employment must be found, they should be considered partners in developing solutions. Hence, young people are not the problem but part of the solution.[7] Young people urge Governments to address their concerns by ensuring that their voices are heard and their ideas integrated into policies that affect them. Young people are asking to be recognized not only as potential political and business leaders, workers and consumers of tomorrow, but especially as partners of today.

10. In the light of these facts and challenges, youth employment was made an integral part of the Millennium Declaration, both as an important target in its own right under Goal 8 of the Millennium Development Goals and as a key contribution to meeting other Millennium Goals.[8] Little progress on implementing the Millennium Declaration will be achieved unless young people are provided with the resources, self-esteem and dignity which decent work can provide.

11. The expected 1.19 billion young people who will be entering the working age population over the next decade[9] represent valuable human capital which, when

properly nurtured, managed and invested in, can provide a springboard for economic and social development. The international community, by focusing its efforts on this "millennium generation" has an unparalleled opportunity to achieve sustainable impact on all the Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015.

III. Analysis of action plans

A. Introduction

12. As of 30 June 2005, a total of 39 Member States[5] had responded to the Secretary-General's note verbale of November 2004 requesting Member States to submit their plan or progress report, showing progress made in the elaboration of national reviews and action plans on youth employment. The global analysis and evaluation is based on these submissions.

13. Many other Member States have prepared or are in the process of preparing national action plans on youth employment, or other policy or strategic documents on employment or on youth which address youth employment. This is, for example, the case of those countries which have stepped forward as lead countries in the Youth Employment Network, but have not as yet submitted action plans or progress reports to the United Nations Secretariat.[9] Furthermore, all 25 European Union member States have prepared national employment reports in the framework of the European Employment Strategy. The Governments of 10 of them have submitted reports in response to the above-mentioned resolutions of the General Assembly.

14. The global analysis examines the submissions from Member States against the guidelines provided in the Secretary-General's report on promoting youth employment (A/58/229, annex I). Specifically, an attempt was made to determine whether: (a) past policies and programmes on youth employment are reviewed and analysed as a basis for moving forward; (b) existing reports or policies on youth employment such as poverty reduction strategies, national youth policies and national employment policies, and reports on ILO conventions relevant to youth employment[10] are drawn upon to ensure that the national action plan is integrated into national policymaking processes and funding mechanisms; (c) the preparation of the plan has involved young people, different government ministries and departments, employers, workers and civil society; (d) mechanisms, baseline indicators and statistical data have been put in place for monitoring progress and evaluating the national action plan, and baseline indicators or statistical data are provided to monitor progress; and (e) assistance has been sought in the drafting process from the Youth Employment Network core partner institutions (i.e., the International Labour Office, the World Bank or the United Nations Secretariat) or from other outside institutions.

15. The analysis seeks to identify whether the national action plan or progress report adopts an integrated approach, linking the supply and demand sides of youth employment policy. It examines if the four global priorities of employability, entrepreneurship, employment creation and equal opportunities have been adopted as a framework for analysis and action within the plan. Other areas given consideration in evaluation criteria used in the present report are the importance attached to information and communication technologies, links between child labour

and youth employment and the importance of youth employment in conflict prevention and resolution.

B. Policy and programmatic orientations of the national action plans

1. Integrated approach

16. The High-Level Panel on Youth Employment has recommended that countries adopt an integrated approach for employment policy development. Most submissions in fact focused on the supply side, namely on the question of preparing young people for the labour market through basic education, vocational training and entrepreneurship development. Nevertheless, other Member States addressed the need to create new job possibilities also, both through job creation schemes and through transforming undeclared work. Those countries which highlighted an integrated approach to youth employment focused on building up a competitive private sector, encouraging foreign and local investment, promoting entrepreneurship and enhancing the employability of the workforce, and equal opportunities, while seeking to reduce the rate of long-term unemployment. Youth employment policies are not just restricted to active labour market policies but extend to social, educational, tax, enterprise and regional policies. Many responses focused on promoting better matching between job opportunities and the available workforce, including through promoting gender equality and combating discrimination.

2. Employability

Education

17. Primary education is considered a prerequisite for successful entry into the labour market, and the importance of primary education for youth employment figured prominently in many replies received. Areas receiving particular attention included the need to grant equal access to primary education for both girls and boys, and in both rural and urban regions, and for the poor as well as for those who can afford to pay the costs of this education. Many countries are seeking to reduce the number of early school leavers. Equal opportunities for everyone are provided through the right of access to a minimum level of basic skills and in some cases also the right to secondary education. Some countries are addressing cultural barriers and making it more acceptable for young girls to attend school and complete their education.

18. The approach of Indonesia to universal basic education is to make it affordable to the poor and improve its quality. While the Syrian Arab Republic has enacted a non-discriminatory law on compulsory education, obliging municipalities to offer education to all, other countries are attempting to address the issue of school dropouts. In Portugal and Germany, programmes provide education, training courses and consultative services for parents and students, focusing on youth at risk and with learning difficulties. These interventions are aimed at preventing disadvantaged students from leaving school and joining the ranks of the unemployed. In Uganda, the Ministry of Education and Sport has teamed up with German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) to provide non-formal education with elements of pre-

vocational training to rural youth in a programme designed to address school dropout.

19. Serbia and Montenegro notes that the unemployment rate is higher among young people with high levels of education. This apparent anomaly exists in many countries where high levels of informal sector employment occupy the majority of the less educated workforce. This presents an inauspicious situation for young people, who may become disenchanted with education as few employment opportunities exist for the highly skilled. Japan and Lithuania have recently set up comprehensive job placement and career counselling offices to support graduates at all levels of their job search. In a school-to-work transition survey undertaken in Indonesia, young people reported that their primary reason for abandoning school was that they did not see the purpose of continuing education in the face of the low quality and inappropriateness of the skills they acquired. Education is often seen, contrary to the conventional view, as lacking relevance for finding a job. Moreover, the need for financial security makes many young people seek employment prior to completing their basic education. The socio-economic environment can thus force children to leave school early and make them vulnerable to trafficking and to child labour.

Vocational training

20. Vocational training is an integral part of all of the replies submitted. Many countries have increased funding for vocational training and introduced courses to link vocational training with self-employment or entrepreneurial skills. Another prevalent means of improving employment opportunities for young people are internships and apprenticeships, which provide tangible work experience required by employers. Monaco and Singapore work with educational institutions to provide these opportunities. Some programmes establish formal training agreements with employers while others subsidize enterprises which hire young people. In some countries, employers voluntarily provide work experience opportunities to young people as they see them as making a unique contribution to the workplace with their enthusiasm, energy, commitment, innovation and willingness to embrace change. Many countries encourage and foster partnerships between employers, workers and educational institutions.

21. Although career choice tends to be individual, Governments recognize that they must provide support for young people to enable them to realize their career ambitions. Nearly all of the plans included measures to improve the preparation of graduates for the labour market. In most countries, schools are principally responsible for student career counselling and guiding students into higher education or the professions. Reports mention measures to improve employment services, such as job fairs, job centres, information dissemination and improving the job-seeking skills of candidates.

22. Breaking down stereotypes regarding unpopular careers is important across many job categories, and some countries have found that they need to encourage young people to take on the jobs which are available, even if those jobs are out of favour.

3. Entrepreneurship

23. Some countries report efforts to create the right economic environment for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, with a principal focus on making it easy to do business. Some have adopted a "making work pay" approach favouring across-the-board social security and taxation reforms. Reducing "red tape" and unnecessary regulatory burdens can go a long way to attract investment, support entrepreneurs and stimulate new businesses. Some countries have also made access to finance much easier, which can help encourage innovation and the creation of new businesses. Subsidies and tax incentives are also offered to businesses that create jobs for young people, including young people with disabilities.

24. Promoting entrepreneurial activity is recognized in many national action plans as an important means of employment creation. Policymakers are trying to make self-employment and business development a preferred option for young people by building up an enterprise culture, creating the right environment and providing access to the tools necessary to create and maintain a business. The first step is to change cultural attitudes in schools towards entrepreneurship by promoting it as a career choice. In the United Kingdom, students aged 14 to 16 in secondary schools across the country will receive at least five days of enterprise education. Furthermore, a business-led campaign, Make Your Mark, will help promote a spirit of enterprise in young people. Improving the effectiveness of entrepreneurship training in vocational schools and developing a media campaign to promote youth entrepreneurship are among the support mechanisms reported.

25. Business start-ups are a key factor for the dynamism of any economy and many countries are implementing measures to make it easier for young people to start and run their own businesses. Some countries are strengthening microfinance institutions and providing incentives for young borrowers who target specific themes. Pakistan, Senegal and the Syrian Arab Republic promote banks and funds for small-enterprise development and support young entrepreneurs in rural areas. Mexico and Colombia report on supporting young men and women in formulating project proposals and business plans, as well as through financing their start-ups.

26. Microfinance also plays a critical role in empowering women, delivering new-found respect, independence, community participation and household income. Therefore, some countries have established funds earmarked for women. In addition to money, Saudi Arabia is providing access to property for women to start up a business. Burkina Faso has designated funds for young people to establish small and medium-sized enterprises, to formalize business ventures in the informal economy and to support innovation by young women. In Algeria, young people without a credit history have access to financial services in order to invest in self-employment activities. The United Kingdom has established a framework for women entrepreneurs which highlights four key areas for action: improving business support services; access to finance; caring and childcare; and transition from receiving benefits to self-employment. It reports an increase in female-owned start-ups.

27. Indonesia is fostering linkages between large and small enterprises, believing that large companies have knowledge, expertise, resources and networks and can provide an effective channel for small and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups to access necessary support.

4. Equal opportunities

28. The national reports and action plans address equal opportunities both with respect to gender and from the standpoint of vulnerable groups. Countries report that diversification of opportunities for women can be achieved by breaking down occupational gender stereotyping and by providing equal access to training for both young women and young men.

29. Many of the documents submitted, in addition to presenting equal opportunities from a gender perspective, gave special attention to ethnic minorities, youth with disabilities, migrants or young people growing up in unfavourable environments. For example, Germany provides pre-vocational training measures for young people with disabilities, youth from low-income families and those with a weak educational background. In Thailand, the Ministry of Labour organizes career days for juveniles living in detention centres, while Bulgaria has special programmes targeted at providing professional guidance and advice to young people raised in institutions, to help them prepare to make the transition to the world of work in the outside world.

30. Indonesia is addressing gender stereotypes in curricula and gender segregation in education. In addition, it is going to conduct rigorous awareness-raising campaigns to change the traditional perception of gender roles and the division of responsibilities between women and men. Finland is currently amending the Act on Equality between Women and Men. The new Act, which will enter into effect in 2005, will reinforce the duty to promote equality and to eliminate discrimination. The Russian Federation targets young women who are socially vulnerable and might face difficulties in the labour market, such as single mothers, women with disabilities and women released from penal institutions. The United Kingdom highlights a recent report that presented a correlation between underrepresentation of women and skills shortages. It concluded that a gender-segregated labour force not only promotes inequality in pay and opportunities, but also denies employers access to the key skills needed to improve productivity. A national strategy is being developed to ensure a consistent approach to tackling occupational segregation. It will be informed by research into reasons why young men and women are not training in areas of skills shortages.

31. Hungary reports on its suburban "Sand Lot" school, which recruits disadvantaged young people between the ages of 16 and 25 who have no skills, have dropped out of school and are hanging out aimlessly. The project helps participants return to school by offering customized training matching their abilities and desires. The programme locates the drifting young people with the help of local social workers. Norway addresses dropouts with its "youth guarantee", which ensures that all young people are in school, hold a job or are in a labour market programme.

32. In Brazil, the national "first job" programme, launched in 2003, is aimed at combating poverty and social exclusion through combining employment and income policies with a public and private investment policy. It targets youth with little schooling, from vulnerable groups and from low-income families and those subject to discrimination. Croatia has implemented a programme, targeting youth from a range of educational levels, to ease the transition from school to the workplace by providing short-term subsidies for employers hiring young people. Nicaragua supports youth from poor rural areas in both self-employment and agricultural cooperatives, in the areas of technical and managerial skills, access to credit and

new technology. The Dominican Republic has a specific plan to place disabled youth in the labour market by working with prospective employers, by helping workers with disabilities to overcome obstacles to obtaining and sustaining employment and by disseminating public information about the situation of workers with disabilities.

5. Employment creation

33. A number of Governments reported on policy measures and investment strategies to stimulate job creation. Key areas are labour-intensive infrastructure development, fiscal and other incentives for business development and encouraging the development of economic sectors with employment potential, such as agriculture, the service sector and information and communication technologies. Other countries, such as the Netherlands, have launched public education campaigns to counteract the perception that unemployed young people are not productive or have nothing to offer.

34. The United Republic of Tanzania and Pakistan report on schemes involving youth groups in labour-intensive activities such as building farm-to-market roads, irrigation, garbage collection and drainage. The objective of these programmes is to reduce poverty and improve living conditions while at the same time creating employment opportunities. The Tanzanian programmes seek to limit the increasing number of school dropouts migrating from rural to urban areas to seek employment. The Government promotes labour-intensive infrastructure development for organized youth groups undertaking agricultural activities in green belts around urban centres, to absorb unemployed young people. In an attempt to promote farming in order to address hunger and poverty, the Government also provides information to increase productivity and competitiveness and offers tax relief on agricultural tools and machinery. The Government also has policies to help young people acquire land. It has allocated special property areas designated for youth infrastructure development and enacted laws to protect young people from discrimination in leasing land.

35. The Syrian Arab Republic has established a national committee specifically to develop and implement activities aimed at generating employment and reducing poverty. By creating opportunities in production and service-oriented sectors, it seeks to provide goods and services that generate employment and hence that can also help alleviate poverty.

36. The Republic of Korea is focusing its efforts on highly educated yet unemployed college graduates, while recognizing that a sustainable impact on youth employment must be based on an economic recovery centred on job creation. However, the Government is concerned that if young people are left unemployed until the economy recovers, they might lose their employability, limiting their future labour market prospects, as well as hindering national competitiveness. The Government aims to break away from the conventional view that employment accompanies growth and is reviewing economic and labour policies from the perspective of job creation. In addition, it is working to establish a business-friendly environment by stabilizing the labour market, improving the corporate investment and management environment through cooperative labour/management relationships and subsidizing those small and medium-sized enterprises that create new jobs.

37. Azerbaijan identifies three major strategies for job creation: active labour market programmes such as public works and wage subsidies, exploiting oil sector revenues to finance employment-intensive public works and promoting a conducive environment for small and medium-sized enterprise development.

38. Algeria notes that aggressive "pre-employment" programmes help young people make the transition from school to the workplace by enabling them to acquire valuable experience in a professional environment, thus making them more attractive candidates for permanent employment.

39. Brazil reports on its programme to create jobs through financial subsidies. For each new job created there is a financial incentive of 1,500 reais. This programme will be closely monitored to guarantee decent working conditions for newly hired young people. A company which is willing to participate in the programme without receiving incentives are publicly recognized by the Ministry of Labour and Employment as "Partner Company in the First Job Program".

40. Other countries report that they are seeking to exploit new opportunities in emerging sectors, to promote those industries making a specific contribution to development and to stimulate economic diversification. Slovenia recognizes that a coordinated response among all government agencies is necessary to facilitate the creation of new jobs. In Oman, an economic diversification policy is emphasizing sectors such as tourism, recognizing its direct and indirect employment creation impact. The Government recognizes that growth can be more or less employment intensive and is looking to achieve a better balance between employment growth and productivity growth, considering the economic and social constraints facing the country.

41. Indonesia also seeks to exploit opportunities in emerging sectors such as tourism, mass media, health and education, environmental conservation, the service sector and information and communication technologies (ICTs). Regarding the latter, Indonesia furthermore recognizes that ICTs are a key driver for growth and jobs in other sectors, since they can help most enterprises improve productivity and remain competitive. Another sector receiving support is that of agro-industries, which can strengthen urban-rural linkages critical for job creation, poverty reduction and combating hunger. Indonesia also seeks to mainstream youth employment issues into local economic development initiatives.

42. The most technically sound policies for youth employment are likely to fail unless they are based on a clear understanding of young people's aspirations, frustrations and expectations vis-à-vis the labour market. A major concern for youth is to find not just any job, but jobs that are sustainable, provide an opportunity for advancement and have good working conditions. Most submissions did not address the issues of quality and sustainability, but some did report on working conditions. Mexico, for example, points out its concern for young workers' rights and seeks to develop actions to eliminate the exploitation of youth, improve working conditions and ensure proper remuneration of work. Brazil notes that employers must recognize workers' rights deriving from collective agreements of the categories to which they belong, and must also guarantee the conditions under which a young person continues in or returns to school. Indonesia is seeking to provide improved protection for women workers overseas. The Slovak Republic emphasizes the creation of jobs for disadvantaged groups.

C. The process of formulating and developing national action plans on youth employment

43. The guidelines for the preparation of national action plans on youth employment (A/58/229, annex I) emphasize the need to first carry out a critical review of past national policies. However, very few responses indicate that such a review has been undertaken. Likewise, little information was provided on previous policies and strategies relevant to youth employment, such as poverty reduction strategies, national youth policies, national employment policies or reports on relevant ILO conventions. Only one country reports that it is reviewing its past employment policies, specific youth plans and poverty reduction strategies to develop a strategic approach to addressing youth employment.

44. Many submissions include statistics outlining the current employment situation for youth. However, only a couple of countries indicate that they have a monitoring and evaluation mechanism in place with baseline indicators or statistical data to monitor progress.

45. The guidelines also emphasize the importance of the national action plans being undertaken through a consultative process involving different departments of government, youth organizations and young people, as well as representatives of employers, workers, the private sector and civil society organizations. Argentina, Brazil, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, the Netherlands, Poland, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Republic of Korea, the United Republic of Tanzania and the United Kingdom are among the countries reporting on various consultative mechanisms for national action plan or youth employment policy development. Involvement of employers' organizations is rather frequent, as is that of governmental ministries other than the ones directly working in the areas of youth or labour. Those who reported engaging other stakeholders note the added value to policies and implementation. Whereas some countries recognize consultation as part of their process to develop a strategy, the majority of the submissions provide few specifics about this consultative process.

46. Youth involvement appears to have been weak and is mentioned in only a few submissions. A few countries report engaging youth in policymaking while others state that they encourage youth groups and organizations. Some provide financial or technical support to youth movements and others encourage cooperation between youth organizations and government at the local and national levels to protect youth interests and needs. Overall, few countries mention budgetary allocations to support implementation of their national action plans.

47. Some countries seek to build bridges between government, educational institutions and the business community as they see the benefit of business involvement in identifying future labour needs and of educating and training youth to meet those demands. Business, including foreign owned companies, can often provide expertise on technology, industrial standards and skills. In this regard, the Republic of Korea ensures that industry and universities work together to meet future skills demand. Universities that establish new departments to meet industrial needs through a contract with companies are eligible for governmental financial support for facilities and research costs. In addition, a system has been established to evaluate whether college curricula meet industrial demands.

48. The Republic of Korea has, furthermore, forged a tripartite social pact on job creation. The Government strives to create a better investment environment for business and devises measures to improve the income levels of low-income families and to enhance the social safety net. Such policies are intended to encourage employers to expand investment for youth employment and to use human resources more effectively. Workers agree to cooperate in improving productivity and in stabilizing incomes.

49. Some countries also note the involvement of additional actors, such as the Youth Employment Network core partners (ILO, the United Nations and the World Bank), other international organizations, donors and civil society. The most popular form of collaboration is within government, as many submissions note the engagement of other agencies in special committees, round-table discussions, task teams or workshops.

50. The relevant United Nations General Assembly resolutions on youth employment (57/165 and 58/133) invite Governments to draw upon the expertise of ILO, the United Nations and the World Bank in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of action plans. Among the limited number of countries which report seeking assistance from these Youth Employment Network core partner institutions are Azerbaijan, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Nicaragua and Uganda. Uganda also reports on its partnerships with the German development cooperation agency GTZ.[11]

IV. Conclusions

51. Since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration in September 2000, the urgency of the commitment to give young people everywhere access to decent and productive work has only increased. Unemployment and underemployment of young people are not only a social concern, but they also have economic and, increasingly, political dimensions.

52. In those countries which have social protection, such as unemployment insurance or welfare protection, youth unemployment represents an enormous drain on national and local budgets, while at the same time representing a terrible waste of the capabilities and potential contribution to social development of the best educated generation of young people ever. In those countries without institutional social protection, the burden of youth unemployment is felt in other ways. It is felt by families who have foregone income and invested in the education of their daughters and sons, only to find themselves continuing to provide income support to their grown children, who are increasingly frustrated and bitter at finding themselves "unemployable". It is felt by young people from low-income families who cannot afford the "luxury" of open unemployment and are therefore struggling to survive in low-income, dead-end and often dangerous jobs in the informal economy. And the burden of youth unemployment is borne by all those living in communities and societies where youth unemployment is the root cause of destructive and self-destructive behaviour, ranging from activity in neighbourhood gangs to membership of local militias, where unemployed young people desperately seek not only income, but also recognition and a sense of belonging.

53. Given the social, economic and political costs of youth unemployment and underemployment, inaction is not an option.

54. The 39 national reports and action plans on youth employment show clearly that countries are actively seeking answers, while at the same time doing much and learning in the process. The experiences reported on are both rich and diverse. A number of broad conclusions can be drawn from these reports.

55. The first is that there is no magic bullet, no one single policy that "works" and which can be exported to other countries as a "good practice". Rather, policies and actions to address youth employment require a coherent and integrated approach which prepares young people for the labour market while, at the same time, preparing the labour market for young people. When the High-Level Panel on Youth Employment proposed a coherent and integrated approach to youth employment, based on the four global priorities of employability, entrepreneurship, equal opportunities and employment creation, it recognized the importance of linking supply- and demand-based perspectives.

56. A second conclusion is that reported youth employment policies have focused largely on the supply side. Many countries report on initiatives to make general education more employment oriented. Others point out the importance of helping young people to create their own employment opportunities through self-employment and entrepreneurship development. Major investments are being made in upgrading and continually re-evaluating vocational training programmes, focused not just on traditional occupations, but also on developing those skills which are essential in a world where young people must expect to change jobs and careers often during their lifetime. Another key element for preparing young people for the world of work is to provide them with work experience. A combination of both training and on-the-job experience underpins the German dual track training system which has helped keep the youth unemployment rate close to the unemployment rate for the population as a whole, a system which has been replicated in different forms according to national circumstances by many other countries.

57. A third conclusion is that all these efforts to prepare young people better for the world of work are likely to fail unless they are accompanied by policies which actually create new and additional employment opportunities for young people coming onto the labour market. While many countries speak of a "mismatch" between skills and the kinds of labour market opportunities available, the overall problem of youth employment is related to the inability of most economic policies to create employment opportunities of a quality which responds to the expectations and the aspirations of young people. Rather than asking the new generation to lower its expectations, policymakers should be working to foster employment-intensive economic growth from both the quantitative and qualitative perspectives.

58. Therefore policies to foster employability and entrepreneurship must necessarily be accompanied by measures to stimulate demand and create additional jobs. More broadly speaking, employment creation should become a central goal — not a by-product — of government policies for investment and economic growth. One specific area on which a number of Governments have reported favourably is increasing the employment impact of infrastructure investment policies, including through labour-intensive public works. While these programmes need not be specifically targeted towards young people alone, they, the new entrants to the labour market, will usually be the prime beneficiaries.

59. Fourth, youth employment should not be approached from a target group angle or simply as a sub-set of the labour market. If policymakers focus their energies first

on creating sound employment outcomes for young people, the results can be expected to have a sustainable impact on the youth cohort throughout its life cycle and to have positive spill-over effects on other age groups. Rather than adopting policies which favour youth to the detriment of other age groups, policies in favour of youth employment should be promoted with a view to improving the situation of all age groups within the labour market (for example, employment for young people is essential for the viability and sustainability of retirement funds and unemployment insurance).

60. Fifth, a consultative process is required for national action plans to have broad-based ownership, which in turn is required for the measures to achieve their intended impact. Consultation with and the participation of representative youth organizations in the preparation of most national action plans has been either weak or inadequately reported. The most technically sound policies are bound to fail if they are not developed and implemented through dialogue with the young people who are their intended beneficiaries. Likewise, the involvement of representative employer and worker organizations has been on the whole inadequate.

61. Sixth, most countries not only have a lot to learn from each other, but are also thirsty for this information and knowledge. The added value of the Youth Employment Network is that it provides a mechanism for the sharing of knowledge and experience among its partners, strengthened by the fundamental principle that everyone, irrespective of the country's level of development, has something to learn and everyone has something to share.

62. A seventh conclusion is that meeting the commitment relating to youth employment contained in the Millennium Declaration requires concerted and coordinated action not only at the local and national levels, but also internationally. Whereas Member States must begin their efforts at home and in their local communities, success in achieving decent and productive work for young people is dependent on a number of elements which extend beyond national borders and which are governed by international practices, policies and agreements in areas such as foreign direct investment, international trade, migration and financial flows.

63. Eighth, developing strategies and programmes for youth employment provides a powerful tool for building political consensus and policy coherence, both at the level of international institutions, such as between the World Bank and ILO, and also at the level of different national Governmental departments (such as labour, finance, education, foreign affairs, trade and industry departments), youth organizations, employers' and workers' representatives and civil society organizations. In view of the broad agreement among different political and interest groups on the importance of youth employment, joint action on youth employment can build trust and confidence for reaching agreements in more controversial areas of economic and social policy, and even for resolving political disputes. Accordingly, it is noteworthy that the Youth Employment Network has become a forum for building coherence and consensus around economic and social policies and for dialogue between young people and policymakers.

64. Finally, and with respect to building political consensus, youth employment provides a bridge between security, peacebuilding and development and the proposal of the High-Level Panel on Youth Employment for a major new policy and action-oriented initiative on the links between youth employment and collective security merits serious consideration and support.

V. Recommendations

65. **The Youth Employment Network provides an important vehicle for realizing the commitment contained in the Millennium Declaration to provide "decent and productive work for young people". The Youth Employment Network derives its strength and solidarity from the leadership of its partner entities, including the growing group of Network countries which have voluntarily stepped forward to provide leadership on this issue and have committed themselves to ensuring policy coherence for the promotion of youth employment. In this regard, the General Assembly may wish to consider the following recommendations:**

(a) **Encouraging those countries which have prepared national reviews and action plans on youth employment to move forward to the implementation stage and, through a process of learning by doing, to continue improving the analytical foundations and impact of their actions. Other countries which have not yet prepared national action plans should be encouraged to do so. All countries which have not yet submitted their national reviews and action plans, or progress reports, to the Youth Employment Network focal point within the United Nations Secretariat are encouraged to do so as soon as possible;**

(b) **Also encouraging Governments to develop their national action plans through collaboration between government, representative youth organizations, employers' and workers' organizations and civil society, and to promote partnerships between public authorities, the private sector, educational institutions and civil society. Governments should also be encouraged to integrate their action plans into their broader development and poverty reduction strategy documents, and to prioritize therein the necessary resources for implementation of these plans;**

(c) **Encouraging Governments to devise new policy-oriented indicators to monitor and evaluate progress on implementing their national action plans. Recognizing that the unemployment rate for 15 to 24-year-olds does not provide an adequate basis for monitoring progress at the national, regional and global levels on achieving the Millennium Declaration target of decent and productive work for young people, recommends that the Youth Employment Network coordinate the work of its core partners to establish an improved indicator which takes into account not only those in open unemployment, but also those young people who are in education, who are underemployed, who are working in the informal economy and who may have dropped out of the labour market altogether;**

(d) **Further encouraging Member States to consider youth employment as integral to their overall strategies for development and collective security, and within this context to give renewed attention to the Millennium Declaration commitment concerning "decent and productive work for young people". This commitment should be seen as underpinning and key to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, including poverty reduction, the achievement of equal opportunities and the fight against HIV/AIDS. Over the next 10 years, efforts should be focused on giving young people between the ages of 15 and 24 access to decent and productive employment opportunities and, by accompanying and nurturing this generation over the coming decade, providing**

the global community with its best chance for attaining all of the Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015;

(e) **Renewing and strengthening the invitation made in General Assembly resolutions 57/165 and 58/133 to the Youth Employment Network, under the leadership of the International Labour Organization and in close partnership with the United Nations Secretariat, the World Bank and other relevant specialized agencies, to assist and support, upon request, the efforts of Governments in the elaboration and implementation of national reviews and action plans;**

(f) **Strengthening the Youth Consultative Group of the Youth Employment Network so that, in addition to its overall advisory role, its constituent youth organizations can play a more active role at the country level to support the development and implementation of national action plans;**

(g) **Inviting new countries and partner organizations to join the Youth Employment Network and encouraging the lead countries to strengthen the work of the Network as a peer exchange, support and review mechanism; and in support of the further development of this mechanism, inviting the International Labour Organization, within the framework of the Youth Employment Network and in close cooperation with the World Bank and the United Nations, to undertake an annual update of this global analysis and evaluation of progress made in the development and implementation of national reviews and action plans on youth employment;**

(h) **Having taken note of the financial contributions made for both the core resource requirements of the Youth Employment Network secretariat and for the country-level work of its partner organizations, encouraging Member States to provide additional financial resources to strengthen and expand the work of the Network at the national, regional and international levels.**

Notes

[1] International Labour Office, *Global Employment Trends for Youth* (Geneva, 2004).

[2] Youth Employment Summit Secretariat: Youth unemployment: The current scenario (May 2002), from: http://www.yesweb.org/docs/issuestatement.pdf.

[3] See S/2003/688, para. 76.

[4] The Youth Employment Network is an initiative of the Secretary-General launched to implement the commitment set out in the Millennium Declaration to provide young people everywhere with access to decent and productive work. It is composed of 15 lead countries, the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Youth Employment, a Youth Consultative Group and a growing network of partner organizations from both within the United Nations system and civil society, and is coordinated under the joint leadership of the Secretary-General, the Director-General of the International Labour Office and the President of the World Bank. ILO is the lead agency for the Network and hosts its permanent secretariat.

[5] See letter from the Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly on follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit (A/56/422).

[6] Investing in youth by promoting youth employment is an investment in meeting the Millennium Development Goals since it can directly contribute to: eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and empowering women; and developing a global partnership for development. By improving the economic and social

situation of people, it can indirectly contribute to reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

[7] ILO estimates, based on the cumulative number of young people entering the 15 to 24-year-old age cohort over the next 10 years.

[8] For the list of Member States that submitted a national review and action plan, or a report on progress towards such a plan, see annex I.

[9] As of the writing of the present report, the countries which have volunteered to be Youth Employment Network lead countries are: Azerbaijan, Brazil, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Syria, Uganda and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Only seven of these 15 lead countries have as yet submitted national action plans or progress reports.

[10] For example, the Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122), the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), the Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

[11] Whereas few countries reported on receiving support from the Youth Employment Network core partner institutions, the Network secretariat is in contact with a number of lead countries, including Azerbaijan, Brazil, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Syria and Uganda to support the development and implementation of their action plans.

Annex I

List of countries that submitted national action plans or progress reports (as of 30 June 2005)

1. Algeria
2. Argentina
3. Azerbaijan
4. Brazil
5. Bulgaria
6. Burkina Faso
7. Colombia
8. Croatia
9. Dominican Republic
10. Finland
11. Germany
12. Hungary
13. Indonesia
14. Japan
15. Jordan
16. Kenya
17. Lithuania
18. Mexico
19. Monaco
20. Netherlands
21. Nicaragua
22. Norway
23. Oman
24. Pakistan
25. Poland
26. Portugal
27. Republic of Korea
28. Russian Federation
29. Saudi Arabia
30. Senegal
31. Serbia and Montenegro
32. Singapore
33. Slovakia
34. Slovenia
35. Syrian Arab Republic
36. Thailand
37. Uganda
38. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
39. United Republic of Tanzania

Annex II

Criteria for a global analysis and evaluation of national action plans on youth employment

A. The process of developing the national action plan

1. Does the action plan utilize the framework laid out in the guidelines for the preparation of national reviews and action plans provided in the United Nations Secretary-General's report on promoting youth employment (A/58/229, annex I)?

2. Before preparing the national action plan did the Government undertake a review of past policies and programmes on youth employment?

3. As suggested in the guidelines, has the Government drawn on existing reports or policy statements on youth employment (e.g., Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, reports of the International Labour Organization Employment Policy Convention (No. 122), national youth policies or national employment policies)?

4. Has the preparation of the plan been a participatory process?

- Involving young people?
- Involving different government ministries and departments?
- Involving social partners?
- Involving civil society?

5. What is the nature and depth of this participatory process?

6. What mechanisms are in place for monitoring and evaluation of the national action plan? What baseline indicators or statistical data are provided to monitor progress?

7. Have the parties developing this action plan sought assistance from the Youth Employment Network core partner institutions (i.e., ILO, the World Bank or the United Nations) or from other outside institutions in this process?

B. Substance and priorities of the national action plan

8. Does the national action plan adopt an integrated approach linking the supply and demand sides of youth employment policy?

9. What are the salient issues raised in the following categories (including the Youth Employment Network's four global priorities)?

- Employability — education; vocational training; work experience; career guidance and job counselling; school-to-work transition; other issues
- Entrepreneurship
- Equal opportunities
- Employment creation — linking youth employment to macroeconomic policy; policies to stimulate demand and to create additional jobs for new labour

market entrants; linking youth employment to overall employment policies, including intergenerational aspects; investment policies

- Importance of information and communication technologies
- Links between child labour and youth employment
- Impact of youth employment on conflict prevention and resolution